IronWatch

JULY 2016 | ISSUE 47

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ABYSSAL TIDINGS

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome back to another thrilling episode of Ironwatch magazine!

We're absolutely buzzing with excitement over the imminent release of the deluxe version of The Star-Struck City, a skirmish wargame set in the sunken ruins of a Primavantor city and based off of the Kings of War ruleset. Keep an eye out for it, as it should be available for free download in a week or two!

Our fourth year of continuous releases is a month away; be sure to drop by and let us know on our Facebook page or our new dedicated Subreddit about what you've liked in the past, and what you'd like to see from us in the future. We're (still) chipping away at the bugs in an Annual release, but there's been recent requests for us to put together some fiction compilations, and that is something we can definitely look at gathering together for release.

Lastly, we'd love for you to submit to us your thoughts and batreps for Warpath. The beta testing is on the final polish, and we'd love to show everyone what fun the system can be in its current incarnation!

As always, whether you're a new reader or an old veteran, thanks for reading, and Welcome to the Watch!

-Austin

Cover art by Boris Samec
Title art by Mark Peasley

Contact us and submit articles at:
ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com

Please note that, while we here at **Ironwatch** *attempt to deliver you the best products and ideas we can, we cannot guarantee the balance of any scenarios or special rules presented herein. If you find any errors, grammar mistakes, or rule imbalances, please contact us on the Mantic Forums (Look for the discussion labeled "Ironwatch Issue X Feedback") and let us know what we could do to improve your fan-produced magazine. If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or editing for our magazine, please let us know on the feedback discussion as well so you can get in on the action!*

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THE IRON FORGE

Welcome back to the Iron Forge.

On display this month for you we have:

- Geoff Burbidge with the superb Tsudochan Dreadball Team: The Mind Fire.
- Loic Boudoya and his outstanding Deadzone Enforcer strike force with both Peacekeepers and Pathfinders as well.
- Marcel Popik, and a stunning array of larger and heavier-hitting Deadzone Plague units.

Keep tuned in next month for more fantastic models, and if you have some painted Mantic minis you'd like featured to possibly become an Iron Forge artist, please email high resolution photos of your miniatures to ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com.

Please include your name and/or Mantic forum name. You can also provide descriptions of your paint jobs and titles if you'd like!

Head-on-a-stick from an Orc Ax by Darren Lysenko

GEOFF BURBIDGE

GEOFF BURBIDGE

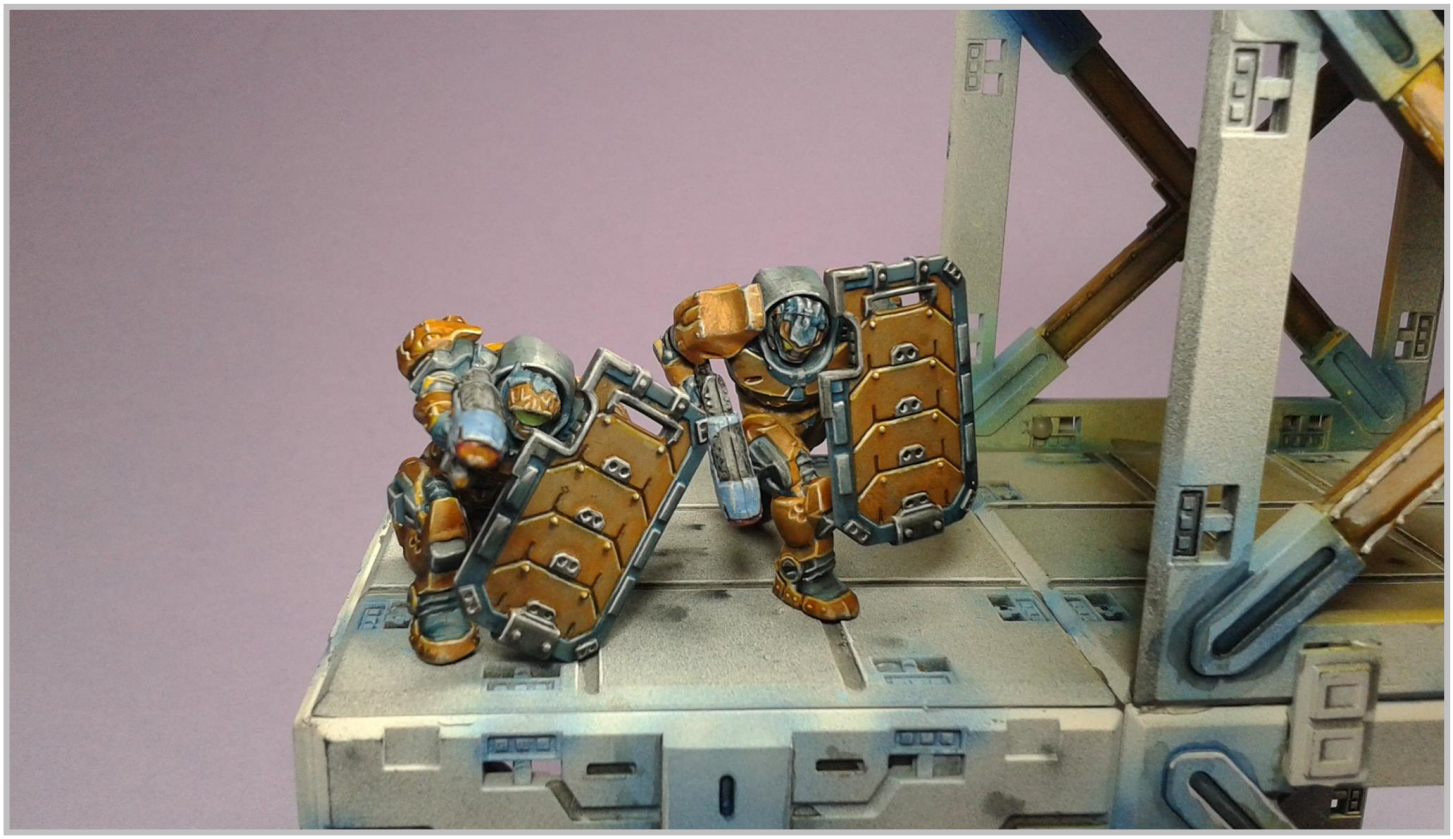
LOIC BOUDOYA

LOIC BOUDOYA

LOIC BOUDOYA

LOIC BOUDOYA

LOIC BOUDOYA



LOIC BOUDOYA

MARCEL POPIK

MARCEL POPIK

MARCEL POPIK

MARCEL POPIK

MARCEL POPIK

MARCEL POPIK

Ogre Shooters by "Azazel'

MANTIC CALENDAR

If you have Mantic-related events or tournaments you'd like to add, please PM Matt Gilbert or Austin Peasley on the forums or **email us** with your event's date, time, location, cost, a brief description, and a URL for more information.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and indicates where Mantic games are being enjoyed, and not necessarily where Mantic will be making an official appearance (Save for the Mantic HQ, of course!).

July

7/23 **ATC Tennessee**

From 8:00 AM 7/23 to 2:30 PM 6/24

Registration is $30 per person, or $60 per team

The ATC is happy to be partnering with Mantic Games this year for a Kings of War Team Tournament! 2016 will mark the first of many team events that Mantic and the ATC will be doing in the years to come.

Camp Jordan- 323 Camp Jordan Pkwy East Ridge, TN 37412

September

9/10 [(Madrid) Nacional Kings of War]

From 8:00 AM 9/10 to 5:00 PM 9/12

This Kings of War tournament is a "Freak Wars Event"

Rivas-Vaciamadrid, Madrid, España

Deadzone Marauders by "Boston Miniatures"

HOPE

By Chris Davis

A dark field, late in the hours of night. A time when most would be asleep, save for 3 poor wretched slaves. They trudge through what had been at one time a massive farm, but the only crop this barren earth leaves to harvest now is corpses. For the slaves the corpses are a reminder of life as it had been. Freedom, to fight to live and to die but for them such freedom is gone. Now all they have is their task.

Each slave carries a large obsidian orb, cool to the touch, oddly though not as cool as one would imagine such a object to be. The slaves in reflection to the orbs are nothing more than a mess of filthy clothing worn to nothingness. They are barely able to keep themselves standing, so feeble are their frames. Despite this they clutch to the orbs with a desperation born of fear and that ever so intoxicating drug: Hope.

Each slave has been told in no uncertain terms that if they drop or lose the orb in their care, they will be killed. Not just killed, but slowly and in the most painful of ways; while slavery be a form of hell, Death can be

Abyssal Dwarf Blacksouls by "Dwarf Giant"

Abyssal Dwarf Katsuchan Rocket Launcher by "puggimer"

a much more cruel hell in its slow release. Sadly, these wretched souls know not that they carry a death sentence.

As the slaves make their way along the farm of the dead, the orbs that where at first cool begin to have a odd warmth. A warmth that increases as they go further along. It is not till they are far along and the first signs of life are seen, that the slaves realize something is truly wrong. It is a small company of men that triggers the reaction. A birth of sorts, but one of the most foul nature.

Most births in nature can be described as a form of beauty; that is not what this birth creates. No, this maelstrom of hate, fury, violence, and pure malice screams into life, tearing and rending as it comes along. First the orbs the slaves carries increases in heat in leaps and bounds, from cool black obsidian to red to white hot. All the while greenish witch-fires pour forth out of countless small cracks along the orbs.

The flames pouring from the orbs leap, bound, and rend at the very air. They sunder everything near them, forming a literal vortex of fire. The slaves are spared the vortex of fire: in the process they are consumed by the intense heat, so fast is the acceleration and intensity of the fire coming from the orbs upon sensing the company of men.

As the slaves are consumed in the heat of the orbs, a shape is molded, forced and made whole. The orbs travel along the fire that is coming out of them, bobbing and weaving as they travel like a bubble in a flow of water that refuses to burst. A column shoots down from the orb to create a base, and from this base a torso of sorts is created of pure flame. As the flames rise up and

away from torso, arms branch out and end in crude, massive clawed hands. As if a jape of anatomy, the orb travels to the chest and in a final act of defiance, bursts from the chest cavity to create a parody of a head. The obsidian orb finally settles in place as the head of this construct of pure fire flame and hate. They are beings of pure inferno, hate and rage, made manifest by the very fire that birthed them.

The cruelest jest of all though is that those pour souls who carried these orbs sentenced their own kind to death, all for the price of hope. In the mind of the dawi zharr, hope is a foolish notion of lesser slave races. To these evil stunted men, there is no hope; just the natural order of things. Lesser races are to be used, and any tool used against them is not seen as deceptive. It is merely the appropriate treatment of all lesser races.▪

Abyssal Dwarf Standard Bearer by "Dwarf Giant"

Kingdoms of Men Knights by Andre Krtizinger

ROAD TO THE RUMBLE

Part 1

By David Reid

Hey there everyone. My name is David Reid and I am one of the organizers behind the Redstone Rumble located in Huntsville, Alabama. As we are going into our 5th year of this event I thought I would reach out a hopefully helping hand for all those who are interested in starting up a multiday event.

What I hope to accomplish here is to plot my own progress in preparation for this year's event, and provide a snapshot of what actually goes into getting a multi-game event like this off the ground. The first portion of this series will touch on the higher level items you'll need to be aware of. We'll drill down into these as the series progresses.

Cash is King

If this is your first event then you'll need to be ready to pay deposits and other long lead items out of pocket. Money can be stressful for a lot of people, and that's before worrying about the costs of running an event for fun on the side. Most venues will require a deposit of some sort to save the date for you, which until you start collecting admission will fall on you to cover.

The same will be required if you decide to do any custom/specialty items. We end up ordering over approximately 1,200 custom dice every year and production doesn't start until you pay them, which again will come out of your pocket if you don't have a war chest ready from previous years.

So depending on your particular area, you could easily be out $1,000 out of pocket waiting for monies to come it. Knowing this on the front end will allow you to plan/scale your event accordingly.

The Venue

You are going to need a place to run your event; I hope this doesn't come as a surprise. In our 5 years of doing the Redstone Rumble we've been at 3 separate locations, so be ready to be flexible.

One thing you'll need to do is to start scouting locations ahead of time, like WAY ahead of time. If you are flexible on when, you could save some serious money and/or get more than you would normally for the same price. Some good places to start looking are hotels, social groups (VFW/ Shriners), wedding venues, concert areas, and even warehouses. They each have their ups and downs, so if possible find out what your potential group of players values the most.

For example, we ended up moving to a hotel after hosting at a social groups place and then a concert area. Our players overwhelmingly wanted an attached hotel, so give them what they want. Remember, the players are your customers. If you are lucky enough to have a store big enough to support your event, count your blessings.

Kings of War battle by "Daedle"

Undead Zombies by George Adsett-Knutsen

Terrain

You are going to need a good bit of it. While it doesn't seem like a huge deal at first, don't let it sneak up on you. Then, after you've gone through the effort to secure/make/buy the terrain, storage will become a factor. Unless you are blessed with a ton of space to dedicate to long term gaming storage, you'll want to factor this into your plans.

One thing that helps is getting friends and club mates in on it. Usually no-one has a problem storing a couple tables worth of terrain at their house, but its when you are talking 20+ tables that it now become an issue. I've found that I like to aim for 7-10 pieces of terrain per table for Kings of War, to give you an idea of what you'll need come game day.

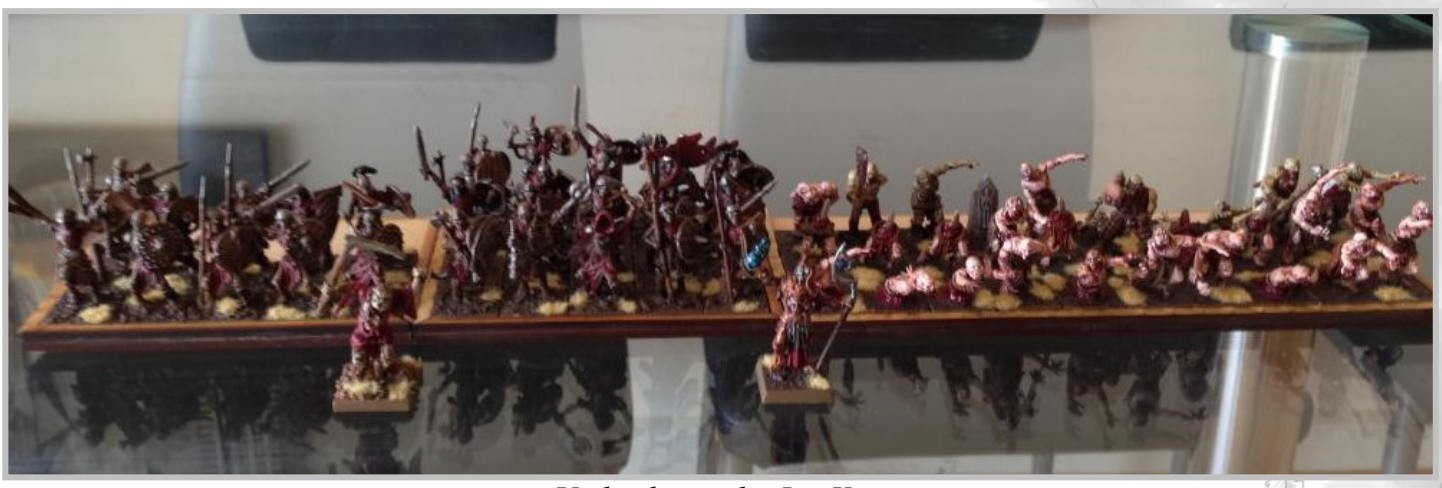
Supplies

This is all the other items that go into running the event. Table toppers, paper, carts, computer, power cords, and etc; basically everything you will need to support the event. Depending on what the venue rent includes, this could even be the tables you are playing on. Toppers and tables are the primary items followed by table covers (i.e. play mats).

Tables can be rented per day if you are a couple short, but toppers will need to be bought/borrowed. The only way really around this is if you put two standard 6X3 folding tables side by side and lay a play mat over them. The only downside here is now you are doubling down on tables. Play mats can be as simple as a cut of felt to start with, then you can attempt to upgrade to the nicer mats out there. Remember, people are paying a decent amount of money, so try not to have them playing on bare wood/table.

As I mentioned previously, this article is just a high level overview of the biggest items logistically that you will face. We'll drill down into these more as the series progresses. If you are interested in more real time updates, feel free to check us out at www.Redstone-Rumble.com or on Facebook as Redstone Rumble. ▪

Goblin Mawbeast and handler by Guiseppe Aquino



Undead army by Jim Kew

CAMPAIGNS OF WAR

By Olaf C. Bressel

Olaf has provided an awesome campaign supplement to play with your own Kings of War gaming group! You'll need some Kings of War armies and a hex map to begin your conquering.

Setup

Each player selects one faction (e.g. the Undead, Legions of Abyss, etc.) and gains 3 armies from this faction, at 1500 points each. These points values are called the strength of an army.

Each army must have at least one hero; this is the Warlord. The chosen Warlord is fixed at the creation of their army, and cannot gain new upgrades or items except through experience points (XP) or injuries. Each Warlord gains one roll on one veteran skill table for free when they is generated. Living Legends can be included in the army but they must be the Warlord and can never gain any benefits (skills, items etc.) from XP their army gained. An army cannot contain any allies. Magic items used by the Warlords are not allowed in any other army list of the same player.

Each player chooses a hex on your map (choose a method of your liking to determine the order and distance between players) and gains this hex and the surrounding 6 hexes as their realm. Make sure that there is enough space on the map for each player and that at least one hex separates the realms of each player. The centre hex of the realm contains the player's Capital. Each realm also contains a Mine and a Fortification II, whose location/hex is determined by the player. Then players takes turns and setting up their armies; one army at a time.

Each player will gain Gold (*G*) during the campaign. This represents the resource the realm is providing (the term can be changed for flavour of the factions) and is used to expand the realm, hire mercenaries and

replace losses. At the start of the game each player has 1500***G***.

Campaign turns

Each of following the steps must be competed before the next one starts. If all players are affected, the order is determined by realm size, starting with the smallest (roll of draws). This order is called player order (PO).

1. Random events
2. Reinforce armies
3. Move armies
4. Challenges
5. Play battles!
6. Victories and losses
7. Endeavours
8. End of turn

1. Random events

The player with the smallest realm rolls on the global event table. Each player then rolls on the realm event table (D66) in PO; a D66 is rolling two dice, with one die representing the '10s' and the other the '1s' (So a roll of a 3 and a 4 would be 34).

2. Reinforce armies

Each player may replace losses in their armies, up to the maximum strength of 1500 points. Each point of replaced strength cost one *G*. Additionally the player has to pay 50*G* per hex the reinforced army is beyond the realm of their player (including the hex the army is currently on). For this purpose the realm is defined as all hexes that are in possession of the respective player and can be can be reached from the capital without

Elven army by Jonathan Faulkes

Dwarven Brock Riders by Jose Manuel Chasco Gonzalez

crossing neutral or hostile hexes. Reinforcement costs the double amount of *G* in enemy/hostile hexes and for superfluous armies.

Players can hire additional mercenaries and reinforcement for one turn to increase the army to 2000 points of strength. Each point of this strength costs the double amount of *G*. No army can have a strength above 2000 points!

3. Move armies

Each player chooses an army and moves it in PO. After that each moves the second army and then the third, in PO respectively.

Each army can move to a maximum of 2 hexes (except for special rules). No army can move through a hex containing a hostile army or fortification, but may enter them. No army can move out of a hex containing a hostile army. No army may share a hex with an allied army at the end of their movement. Moving out of a mountain or river hex costs 2 hexes of movement.

If an army ends their movement in a neutral hex, which has not been explored before, the player rolls on the exploration table and applies the result immediately.

4. Challenges

Battles are set in PO. The following conditions are checked in order and the first result that matches the conditions is applied. No player may be challenged more than once.

- If there is a hostile army in the same hex with an army owed by the player, they have to challenge the other army.
- If a player has a hostile army in their own realm, they must challenge this army.
- If the player has an army in an enemy's realm, they must challenge that player.

If no other option applies or no enemy player is left to challenge, there is no need to play a battle (you use the fast combat rules as normal).

5. Play battles

Battles are played according to the normal rules in the KoW rulebook. Each player writes an army list according to the normal rules with their current army strength. The armies must contain the Warlord and all possible veteran units.

If a player has 50% more victory points at the end of the battle, it is a decisive victory for that player and a decisive loss to the other player. The same is result is applied if one army is completely destroyed (routed) in battle.

Realm hexes with no army in them have a defensive value that that can be used to generate a defensive army. These armies do not contain a Warlord.

The defensive value (or defensive army strength) of a hex is 1000 points +100 for each hex adjacent from the same player + any fortifications, up to a limit of 2000 points.

Fast battles: If a player has already played a battle, they may choose to use the fast battle rules. Likewise all battles of armies in hostile

Undead Wraiths by "left64"

Elven army by "Maccwar"

hexes, where no challenge was issued, can be decided with the fast battle rules.

Both players roll 3D6 and add their army strength divided by 100 (3D6 +strength/100). The player with the higher total is the victor. If the difference is 10 or higher, it is a decisive victory for that player and accordingly a decisive loss for their opponent. Treat the fast battle as normal battle for calculating losses, but the victorious army only gains 1 XP and no more.

6. Victories and losses

After a victor and loser of a battle have been decided, each player checks on the table for the losses for their army and how much strength their army loses. The losing army is moved one hex by their owner in the direction of their realm, or in the shortest direction out on an enemy's realm, and cannot claim a hex this turn. If an army falls below 500 points of strength after a battle, it is removed from play. The player can decide if they wants to use the Warlord for a new army or generate a new one. In the first case all XP used to improve the Warlord are retained in the new army.

Warlords routed in battle roll on the Injury table. If they die the army loses all XP used to upgrade the Warlord as well as all unspent XP. A new Warlord has to be created and the army is immediately move to its player's capital.

Each partaking army gains 1XP per battle, plus 1XP if a unit survived the battle in the enemy deployment zone and 1XP if the enemy Warlord was routed.

Only the victorious army gains 1XP in a fast battle.

7. Endeavours

First, XP may be spent to upgrade armies (as detailed in the special rules section).

Each player may spend *G* to build one structure or upgrade an existing one. New structures do not generate anything in the turn they are created. The player may generate a new army in their capital, if they can have another army, by spending one *G* per point of army strength. The rules for starting armies still apply and the new army must have at least 500 points of strength.

After that, armies may raid enemy or neutrals structures. Remove the structure from the map and gain *G* in the amount of the construction cost for that structure. Mercenary camps can only be raided after a successful battle. At this step *G* is also collected from all other sources.

At the end all hexes containing an army will be added to the corresponding players' realm. Hostile hexes can only be claimed if the army claiming it was victorious in battle this turn.

8. End of turn

The turn ends; this is a good time to update the campaign notes and determine the size of the realms. If a realm has more armies than it can support, all superfluous armies have to be removed down to the minimum of 3 armies. Remember that the reinforcement of superfluous strengths still costs the double amount.

Undead army, image courtesy of Mantic Games

Kingdoms of Men Shield Wall by "ManticFanBoyLAD"

Special rules

Experience

Each army can only use their respective XP to upgrade itself. The first upgrade costs 1XP, the second 2XP, the third 3XP and so on.

Upgrades are:

- Roll for one unit or individual on a veteran skill table
- A unit or individual can gain a magic item

New magic items must pay the cost of a magic item once with *G,* but does not count towards the point cost of the unit or individual!

If the unit or individual is not the Warlord, it is called a Veteran(unit). Each Veteran (unit) may not be upgraded further with XP.

Veteran (units)

Veteran (units) may not be changed in size or equipment, and are bound to the army of their Warlord. If the strength of the army cannot support the point costs of the unit, it cannot partake in the following battle. Magic items and veteran skills are retained but do not count towards the point costs.

Mercenary

If a player finds a mercenary camp and allies to it, they can use these mercenaries as allies in their armies. They can only ally to mercenaries with a fitting alignment. A mercenary camp can also be attacked and also counts as a hostile hex with a defensive value of 3D6 x 100. Calculate the value anew each time before the player in the hex choses their action. This value is then also used if the camp is raided after a battle.

If an army ends its movement in a mercenary camp controlled by another player, they can try to conquer, raid, or bribe it. Conquering and raiding is handled as described above. If conquered, the camp changes ownership but is not destroyed. The attacker can also try to bribe the camp by spending the defensive value in *G*. If they does the camp changes sides without a fight.

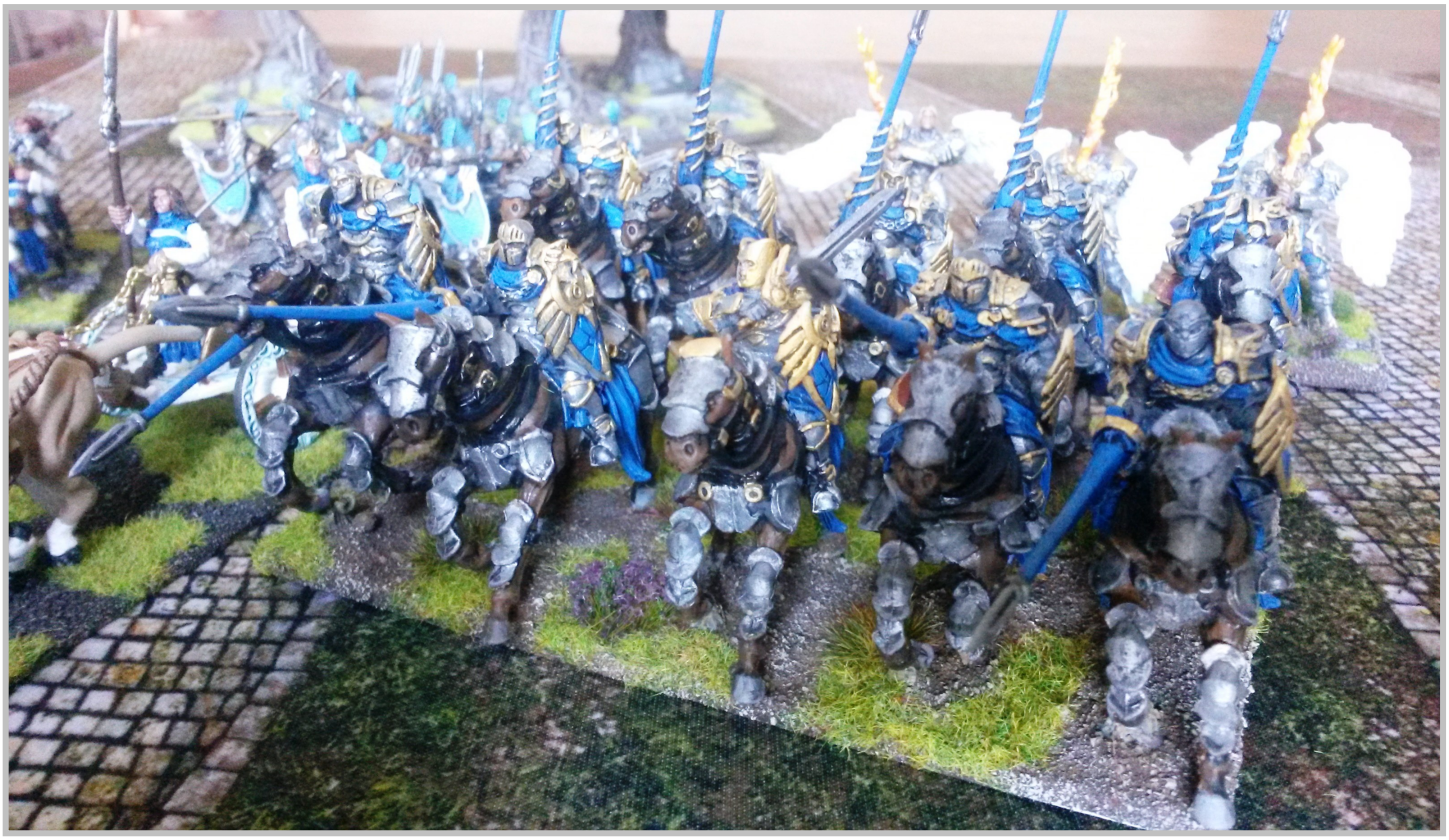
D66	Event Result
11	New Orders: one of your armies is removed for D3 turns from play
12	Starvation: one of your armies moves one hex less
13	Traitors in the midst: your enemies can force you to reroll 1D6 per fast battle
14	Assassin: chose one of your Warlords and roll on the injury table
15	Deserters: chose one of your hexes and make it neutral
16	Plague: remove all structures in one of your hexes
21	Unrest: change a hostile hex to a neutral one (cannot change a capital)
22	Colonists: add a neutral hex to your realm and roll on the exploration chart
23	Swift strike: chose a hostile hex with a structure and claim it for your realm
24	Pioneer: destroy a hostile structure (cannot destroy a capital)
25	Raiders: raid a hostile mine
26	Infiltrator: take over a hostile fortification
31	Good fortune: you can reroll the exploration table this turn
32	Forced marching: move one of your armies twice
33	New mounts: one of your armies moves one additional hex
34	Bad scouting: you may move one army of your enemy (when they decide to move it)
35	Stroke of genius: your armies gain one additional XP if they gain any XP this turn
36	Veterans: one of your armies immediately turns into a veteran unit with one upgrade for free
41	Spy: you can see the army list of an opponent before you write yours for a battle with that opponent
42	Surprise attack: roll a D6 for in one of your battles for each enemy unit: on a 1, place that unit in reserve
43	Exploration: in one of your next battles chose D3 units : they gain vanguard for that battle
44	It's a trap!: both players reroll the roll off for the first player in one of your battles if you don't like it
45	Ambush: you decide who deploys first (and completely) in one of your battles
46	Overkill: one of your armies gains an additional 25% (max 2000 points) of army strength for a battle this turn
51	Bloodthirsty: D3 units in one of your armies gain the vicious special rule this turn
52	Extra shift: Your mines generate 50% more ***G*** this turn
53	Diplomacy: choose an opponent, he can not challenge you this turn or claim hexes from you
54	Suggestion: choose an opponent and decide who he challenges this turn
55	Secret tunnels: you can challenge any opponent this turn
56	Killer instinct: you can force one opponent to reroll the result of the injury table
61	Miners: you gain a mine and place it on an empty hex (this does not count towards the construction limit)
62	Quick victory: one of your armies gains enough XP to gain another upgrade
63	Magic merchant: one of your Warlords gains an additional magic item that counts as upgrade
64	Tactical genius: your realm is counted as the smallest for this turn
65	Militia training: all of your defensive values are increased by 100 this turn
66	Healing potions: all of your armies are filled up to 1500 points

2D6	Global Event Result
2	Meteor shower: determine D3 random hexes and destroy everything in that hex. Those hexes becomes neutral hexes
3	Earthquakes: all mines generate only half their income this turn
4	Storms: all armies move one hex less (min 1 hex)
5	Solar eclipse: all units have one lower wavering limit this turn
6-8	Nothing unusable
9	Drought: rivers do not reduce movement this turn
10	Mercenaries: a new neutral mercenary camp appears on a random neutral hex
11	The stars align: each player may roll twice on the event table and chose the result they prefer
12	Good business: structures costs 25% less this turn

Degree of Victory	Losses suffered
Decisive Victory	10%
Victory	15%
Draw	20%
Loss	25%
Decisive Loss	35%

D6	Warlord Injury
1	Deadly wound: roll another d6. On a 1, the Warlord is dead; on a 2+, the warlord loses 1 on a random attribute permanently (roll a D6: 1= Me , 2= Ra, 3= Def, 4= Nerve (both), 5= Att 6= Sp) and then applies result two on the Warlord Injury table.
2	Serious wound: the Warlord cannot participate in the next 2 rounds of battle, but the point costs still have to be paid for him
3	Wounded: the Warlord cannot participate in the next battle, but the point costs still have to be paid for him
4	Where is my sword: the Warlord loses one random magic item or upgrade (the point costs still stays the same)
5	Flesh wound: the Warlord loses 1 Nerve for the next battle (both values)
6	Lucky: Nothing happens to the Warlord!

Undead Revenant Cavalry by Martin Geibner



Basilean Knights by Paul Mullis

D6	Fighter Trait	Marksman Trait	Ranger Trait	Cavalry Trait
1	Brutal	Big shields	Vanguard	Vanguard
2	Headstrong	Headstrong	Ensnare	Nimble
3	Elite	Elite	Pathfinder	Elite
4	Crushing strength +1 (max 4)	Piercing +1 (max 4)	Strider	Thunderous charge =1 (max. 4)
5	Vicious	Vicious	Headstrong	Inspiring
6	Fury	Indirect fire	Fury	Brutal

D6	Monster Trait	Warlord Trait	Mage Trait
1	Brutal	+1 Nerve (both values)	+1 Nerve (both values)
2	Crushing strength +1 (max 5)	+1 Melee skill	+1 to cast spells (max 2+)
3	+2 Attacks	+2 Attacks	One of the known spells gains 1D extra or a new spell can be taken from the army list entry
4	Strider	Elite	Elite
5	Breath attack (Either 10 if the monster has none or +5 if it has one already)	Crushing strength +1 (max 4)	Piercing+1 (max. 4)
6	Regeneration	Very inspiring	Inspiring

2D6	Exploration Result
2	Deadly flora: the army loses D6 x 20 points of strength
3	Reavers: a hostile mercenary camp
4	Swamp: the army cannot move next turn
5-8	Nothing of note
9	Stockpile: the player gains 100*G*
10	Abandoned mine: the player gains a mine on that hex
11	Mercenary camp (roll for the faction the army belongs to)
12	Abandoned castle: the player gains a fortification III on that hex

2D6	Mercenary Camp Roll
2	Abyssals
3	Abyssal Dwarfs
4	Undead
5	Goblins
6	Orcs
7	Kingdoms of Men
8	The Herd
9	Ogres
10	Dwarves
11	Varangur
12	Twilight Kin

Structures

Capital:
The capital is the centre of a players realm. It generates 500*G* per turn, can support 3 armies and counts as fortification IV (400 points of fortification). Can only be attacked if you control 3 or more adjacent hexes.

Mine:
Construction: 500*G*

Mines generate 200*G* per turn.

City-states (set on neutral hexes on start of the game):
Counts as mine, fortification III and grants the support for another army.

Undead Revenant Knight by Peter Grose

Kings of War siege by "SneakyChris"

Fortification I, II, III:
Construction: I 100*G*, II 200*G*, III 300*G*

The owner of the construction can field 100 (I), 200 (II) or 300 (III) points of fortifications if they fights in this hex. This counts towards the maximum of 2000 points of strength. Fighting on a hex with fortification III or higher should be played in a siege scenario. In fast battles the fortifications add their level x 100 to the defensive value.

On free hexes only fortification I can be build for the construction cost listed. These can be upgraded to fortification II or II for the listed costs.

Wizards tower:
Construction: 500*G*

Players owning a wizards tower in their realm may switch the two dice result of their random event result (e.g. result 16 turn to 61).

Faction rules

Elves

- Wisdom of the Kin: All elven armies start with 1XP.
- Ancient Tactics: Elven armies can move an additional hex after a victorious battle if they had movement left before the battle. They can even enter hostile hexes (which triggers a new battle).
- Slow-Breeding: Elves have to pay 10% *G* more to reinforce their armies.

Dwarves

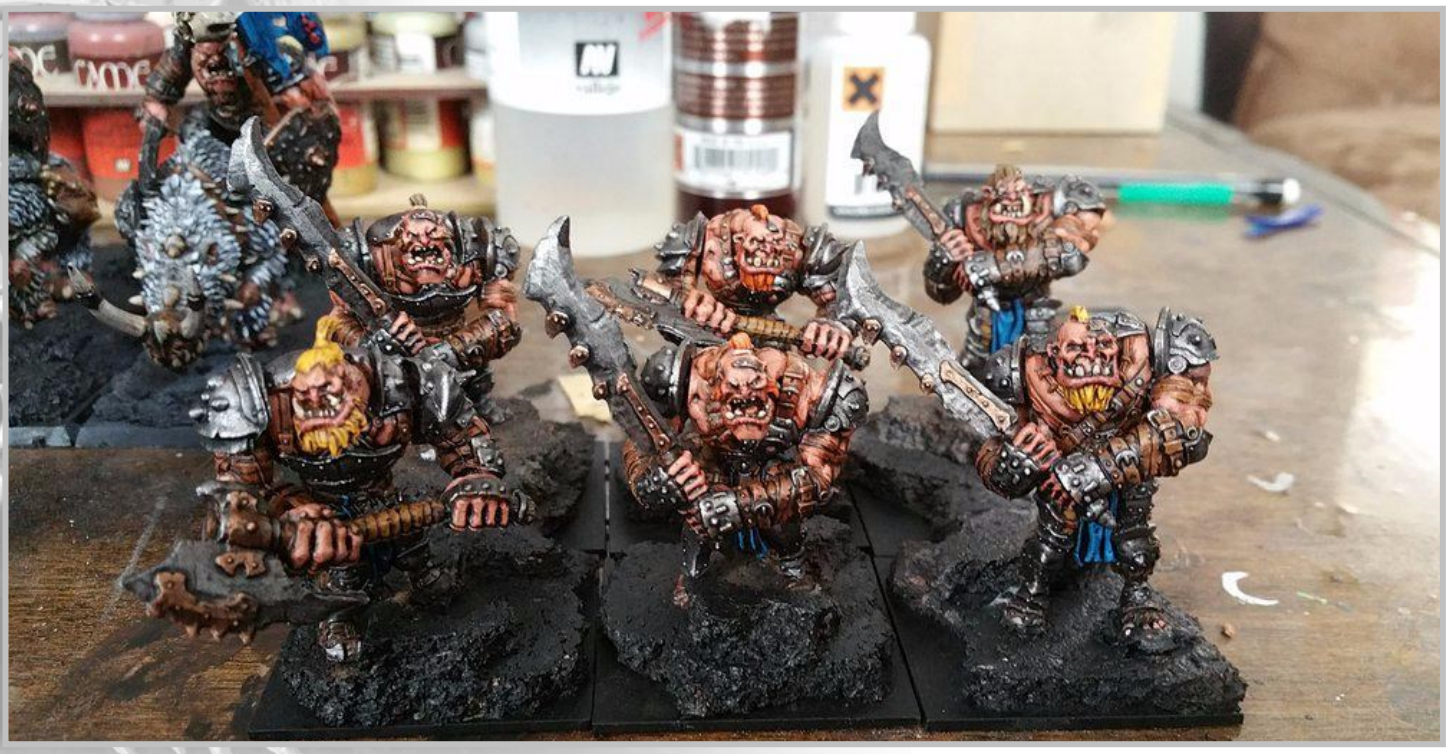
- Diggin' In: Fortifications of dwarves cost 10% less.
- Old Tunnels: Once per turn the dwarf player can remove one army and place it anywhere on the map (except hostile capitals) instead of movement. This costs the player 100*G*.
- Greedy: Dwarven mines generate 180*G* per turn.

Kingdom of Men

- Expansionists: Once per turn the kingdoms can take over an additional neutral hex adjacent to their realm (roll for exploration and apply the result).
- Militia: Kingdom armies have to pay 10% less *G* to reinforce armies.
- Disorganised: If a Warlord is wounded or worse (results 1-3 on the injury table), the army cannot move for one turn.

Abyssal Dwarves

- Slavers: Abyssal dwarves gain 50% more *G* from raids.
- Brutal Expansion: Once per turn abyssal dwarfs can take over an additional neutral hex adjacent to their realm (roll for exploration and apply the result).
- Slave Armies: If the Warlord was routed in the battle the army loses additional 5% of strength.



Ogre Warriors by Taylor Holloway

Kings of War siege by "TSNC"

<u>Goblins</u>

- So Many Goblins: Goblins can have at least 4 armies. They still start with 3 though.
- Sneaky: Before a battle a goblin player may roll a d6: on a 5-6 they can see the army list of their opponent before they write their own.
- Back-Stabbing: The opponent can force the goblin player to reroll the injury table for their Warlords.

<u>Orcs</u>

- Crushing Skulls: Orc armies can reroll the dice for fast battles.
- Warrior Race: Fortifications of orcs cost 10% less.
- Tribal Dispute: The opponent can force the orc player to reroll the injury table for their Warlords.

<u>Undead</u>

- Rise: Undead suffer 10% less losses after a battle.
- Surge: One undead army per turn may move up to 3 hexes without being hindered by rivers or mountains. The other armies use Shambling Horde instead.
- Shambling Horde: The other undead armies only move 1 hex per turn, but are not hindered by rivers or mountains.

<u>Ogres</u>

- Foe Crusher: Ogres can reroll the dice for fast battles.
- Nomads: Ogres can move their capital one hex in their realm after as if it were

an army (but it has to stay in the realm).
- Always Hungry: Ogres have to pay 10% *G* more to reinforce their armies.

Forces of Basilea
- Champions of the Shining Ones: All Basilean armies start with 1XP.
- On the Wings of Angels: Basilean armies may move one additional hex per turn.
- Honourable: Basilean armies only get 50% for raiding hexes.

Forces of Nature
- Magic Nature: Forces of Nature can decided which order to read the D66 for the random event, even without a wizards tower. If they draw in PO, they count as the smaller realm.
- Healing Magic: Each army of nature regains 1d6 x 10 points of strength (up to 1500) before it is reinforced.
- Disdain for Civilisation: Conquered city-states only have the benefit of additional armies.

Abyssals
- Summoned Monsters: Once per turn the Abyssal player can remove one army and place it anywhere on the map (except hostile capitals) instead of movement. This costs the player 100*G*.
- Hellish Flesh: Each army of abyssals regains 1d6 x 10 points of strength (up to 1500) before it is reinforced.
- Not From This World: If an abyssal army suffers a decisive loss, it is removed and placed on the army's capital.

Kings of War battle by "WeedyElf"

Kingdoms of Men army by Andre Kritzinger

Empire of Dust

- Like the Desert Wind: Empire of Dust armies may move on additional hex per turn.
- Embalmed Legend: Warlords of the Empire of Dust may reroll the injury table result.
- Ancient Pride: If an army loses decisively in a battle, the Warlord misses the next battle out of shame.

Ratkin

- From the Burrows: Ratkin armies have to pay 10% less *G* to reinforce armies.
- From Below: Once per turn the Ratkin player can remove one army and place it anywhere on the map (except hostile capitals) instead of movement. This costs the player 100*G*.
- Ramshackle: Ratkin armies lose 5% more strength if they lose a battle.

The Herd

- Ambushers: If a herd army is in a forest hex it can reroll the dice to determine who set ups first and who has the first turn.
- Like a Mountain Goat: The Herd can move without penalty from mountain hexes.
- Beasts of Wilderness: Mines cost for the Herd 600***G*** to construct.

League of Rhordia

- Technical Advanced: Fortifications of Rhordia cost 10% less.
- Halfling Chefs: One unit in a Rhordian army is fearless and thus cannot be Wavered.
- Steam Powered: Roll for each army of Rhordia before they move with a d6: if the roll is a 1 the army runs out of fuel and cannot move this turn.

Twilight Kin

- Slavers: The Twilight Kin gains 50% more *G* from raids.
- Dark Magic: Twilight Kin players can decided which order to read the D66 for the random event, even without a wizards tower.
- Ritual Sacrifices: Armies of the Twilight Kin always lose 5% more strength after a battle.

Brotherhood

- Martial Training: The player can reroll all dice for Veteran skills.
- Knights: Armies of the Brotherhood move one additional hex per turn.
- Purity Vows: Armies of the Brotherhood have to pay double the amount of *G* to bribe or hire mercenaries.

Varangur

- Gift of Korgan: The Warlord of a Varangur army can choose a Gift of Korgan for free when they are created.
- Raiders: The Varangur gain 50% more *G* from raids.
- No Mercy for the Weak: If at least half of an army was routed in battle, the army loses additional 5% of strength.

Salamanders

- Fire Magic: Salamander players can decided which order to read the D66 for the random event, even without a wizards tower.
- Trauma Regeneration: Each army of Salamanders regains 1d6 x 10 points of strength (up to 1500) before it is reinforced.
- Slow Metabolism: Salamander players have to pay 10% *G* more to reinforce their armies.

Trident Realms

- Maritime: Armies of the Trident Realms can move through river and sea hexes without penalty (they cannot claim sea hexes).
- Sea Realms: Trident Realms can count a single sea hexes as part of their realm for reinforcement to circumvent hostile hexes or claiming hexes.
- Land Legs: Fortifications for the Trident realms cost 10% more.

Night-stalkers

- Shadow Forces: A night-stalker player can swap the strengths of their armies before reinforcing them. The rules for army composition still apply.
- Nightmares: Armies of the night-stalkers lose 10% less strength after battle.
- Ethereal: Night-stalkers do not get fortifications at the start of the game and can never build them.▪

Undead Ghouls by "Azazel"

UNBOXING DUNGEON SAGA THE INFERNAL CRYPTS

By Guillaume Bertin

Wow, 'Mantic France' has been awesomely fast! I ordered my copy of *Dungeon Saga: The Infernal Crypts* last Wednesday (the 18th of May) and received it only two days later; that is cool!

I'd like to thank the team for being so careful and really paying attention to what customers ask. Not sure about the rest of the world but I ordered directly from 'Mantic France', and being in contact with a member of the staff and knowing the names of people involved changes a lot when buying! I definitely appreciate the 'humanity' of Mantic compared to some other companies!

This being said, I wanted to share with you a bunch of feelings that came to me as I unboxed this expansion set for *Dungeon Saga*. As with all the boxes so far, the look of the box itself is just beautiful! You get the feeling that you are holding a precious spellbook. Collecting the expansions conveys the impression of being in a library, containing some treasures.

Books containing treasures? Yes indeed. *Dungeon Saga* boxes containing some treasures? Let's see…

Well… Yeah I know… more miniatures to paint… I also ordered the legendary versions for two new heroes included in this expansion!

The first things you see once you open the box are the quest book, the datasheet for all the new minions. The box said "Infernal" right? So I hope daemons are going to kick some asses! I must say that there are some shrewd ideas; both as far as terrain and minions are concerned (like the lava pools heroes have to cross, the rocks to jump on over the pools, or - without spoiling the

surprise for players/readers - some skills for the minions themselves). I am not an expert with daemons in the world of Mantica, but the developers managed to come up with nice skills that seem to fit those we find and the 2nd Edition Rulebook for *Kings of War*. The quest book includes 6 new quests, which will allow the Overlord to pretend to be a daemon for a while!

You do get something totally different in terms of game play than what you had as a necromancer, and that's refreshing to have a new role as Overlord! Okay, you wanted to become an Arch-Daemon? Wish granted!

You also get a few new hero cards: I knew about Venetia and Arianya; just these two ladies nearly made me buy the box all by themselves. The look they have is a refreshing change from the classic heroes I am used to playing with, and in terms of game play, they look promising to play/fight against! I know the four 'classic' heroes are a must-play in dungeon crawlers, but I really needed some variety before building my own heroes!

Abyssals by "C. M. Minis"

However, you also find two other hero cards, and that is where I feel less enthusiastic... To be honest, I do not know how to feel about characters that are so similar to heroes I already have.

From the stand-alone game you do already have the cards for Orlaf/Danor, both "standard" and "legendary" versions (though the "legendary" miniatures are sold separately). This new box offers "Ragran" (a blond version of Orlaf with very close stats/ skills) and Sémential (Danor wearing green with the same similarities as far as stats/ skills are concerned).

I'm sorry here, but that seems a bit cheap to me. Not only do pictures on the cards are THE SAME with different colors, but you don't even get the minis so you have to either get them from another dungeon crawler (I am lucky I already have plenty from older games) or you buy another set of basic heroes (I am not even sure this is possible

To say that I was disappointed is a bit of an understatement… You can find a few differences in the legendary versions, so I will be curious to try an arena game opposing legendary Orlaf vs legendary Ragran and legendary Danor vs legendary Sémential, but if there was any "match up" while comparing the cards, I am not sure the Heroes v2 stand a chance...

Now that I am thinking of it, it definitely makes me want to plan a new article with these miniatures staged in an Inn where one Barbarian drank too much and started a fight against another, and a second in the middle of a Laboratory/Library where one Wizard messed up with the documents and recipes of another...

Sorry! My mind was wandering; let's get back to the expansion!

Now, the greatest part of the boxes, as usual: the miniatures! After all, that is why you buy such a game in the first place! That clearly put an end to my disappointment.

A few months ago, I started a daemon army for *Warhammer* (both the old Fantasy Battle and 40K). Buying Dungeon Saga's standalone game was my first step in Mantica, and considering my personal collection, it made me start thinking about a "Forces of the Abyss" army for *Kings of War*. Since you are allowed to use whatever models you have from other companies, I thought it a great idea! Now that I have a few unique "Mantic" models, my army is starting to take shape. I just need to buy an extra set of miniatures to complete some units (Molochs, Tortured souls, and Hellhounds).

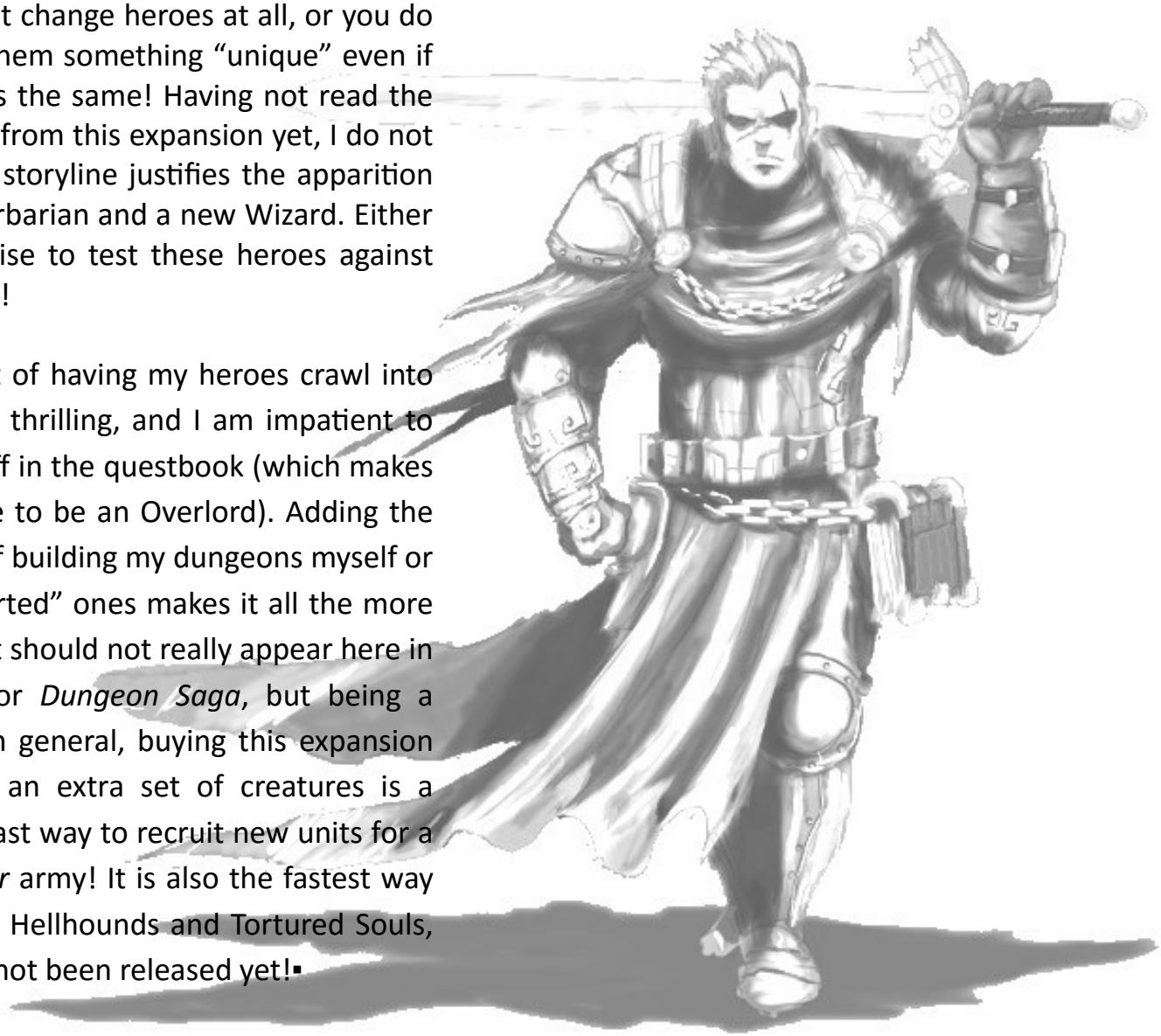
Speaking of which, you have them all! Effrits, Molochs, Succubis, Hellhounds and lower abyssals are all in the box. The miniatures are finely detailed, smooth to touch and already look ready for battle with that red plastic. II should mention that Mantic clearly pays attention to the non-modelist gamer, who wants a "ready to play" collection of minis: no work needed if you don't want to bother assembling or painting, and they're pre-assembled! Moreover, the plastic allows you to identify undead from the heroes from the abyssals from the bosses! Having been through a whole regiment of daemons (early 2000's bloodletters), I am not afraid of that small bunch of daemons, and I can't wait till I get my hands and brushes on the Molochs and the boss!

Finally, the tiles! Not really much to say (apart from lava stuff) which completes the set of "hell-like" tiles you get in the stand alone. But… but… but you get a big 8x11 tile consisting either of a "classic" dungeon floor OR the amazing lava pool you can see bon the next page! Also included are a bunch of tokens and some more tiles allowing either to play in lava/hell-like terrain, or to further enhance your dungeons.

Well, to conclude I must say that I'm quite excited at what I'm getting in this box! The only negative point of this expansion was the 'Barbarian v2' and 'Wizard v2.' Maybe the advanced system - which I don't have yet since it has not yet been released in France - does not allow you to create much difference when you create the same type of hero, but even the "legendary" versions

seem just copy/pasted. In this case, you either do not change heroes at all, or you do try to give them something "unique" even if the profile is the same! Having not read the background from this expansion yet, I do not know if the storyline justifies the apparition of a new Barbarian and a new Wizard. Either way, I promise to test these heroes against one another!

The thought of having my heroes crawl into the Abyss is thrilling, and I am impatient to read the fluff in the questbook (which makes it a pleasure to be an Overlord). Adding the possibility of building my dungeons myself or play "uncharted" ones makes it all the more enjoyable! It should not really appear here in an article for *Dungeon Saga*, but being a wargamer in general, buying this expansion and buying an extra set of creatures is a cheap and fast way to recruit new units for a *Kings of War* army! It is also the fastest way to get some Hellhounds and Tortured Souls, which have not been released yet!▪



A SHADOW OVER WESSENLAND

By Joe Murphy

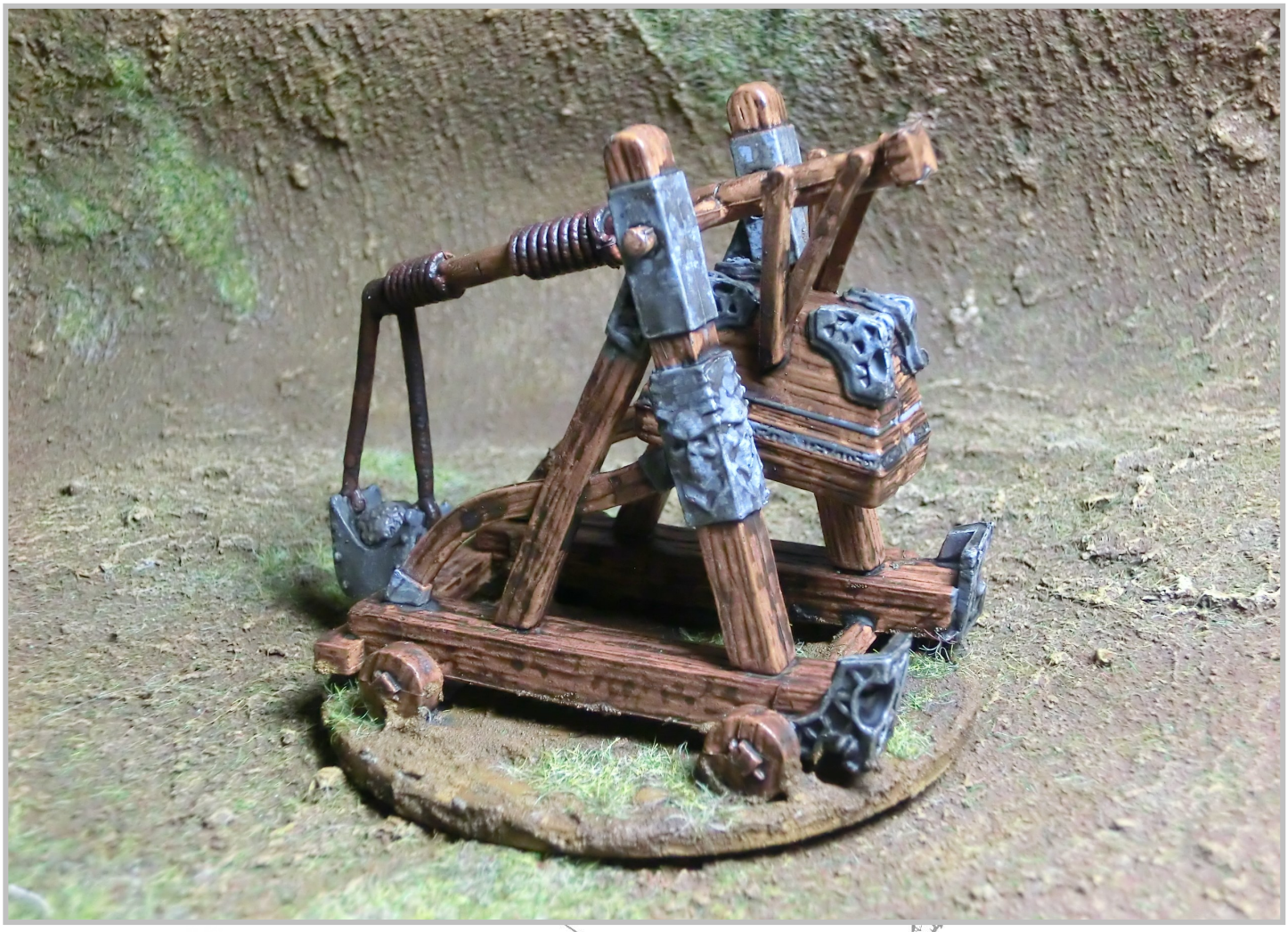
See the king on his knees. On his knees and not even knowing.

See him. Alfred Lundsman. Lord of Wessenland. By right and by blood. See him as he sits on his throne. In his long hall. See him as he smiles. See his eyes. The brightness of them. He laughs and places his hand on the shoulder of the kneeling figure at his feet. A man. Balled almost double like some religious supplicant. The man holds a drawing in his hands. A sketch of a castle. A plan.

Not a thing of wood and shaped turf like the long hall in which Alfred and his forefathers held court. Held court since the founding of the kingdom by Alfred's great-grandfather. Not this thing, though. This was a thing of stone and slate. A facsimile of the buildings described in wondering tones by the Wessenland sailors returned home. Raiders and traders. And slavers, too. Once upon a time. Before Alfred and his lust for change. For enlightenment.

Before Alfred. Longships chopping through the sea. Longships knifing inland. Slicing

Kingdoms of Men Knights by "imm0rtal reaper"



Kingdoms of Men Trebuchet by Andre Kritzinger

their way up the warm rivers of softer peoples. Bringing fire and steel and the long, slow death of the captive enslaved.

Not now, though. Not under Alfred. Alfred the Learned. Alfred the Bookish.

See the western coast of this land. The coast of Wessenland. Sand-seamed, where it slopes to the sea. Black mountains bordering it to the west and north. The terrain motley with green and gold and brown. Wessenland. Wessenland and its people under the coming dark.

The ditches, the fields, the brown ribbons of the roads, all are limned in the purple and gold of the dying day.

It is late summer and all is quiet. All is calm.

And in the dusk, in the fields, the blocky shapes of oxen can be seen. Steam flaring out from their snub noses. The harvest beginning. Men and women gathered in teams about their ploughs. Work clothes and dusty leather all becoming matt black in the failing light. And here and there in the fields, bigger beasts work. Their riders strapped into their saddles some yards above the earth they till. Clod stompers, they are nicknamed. Heavy slabs of muscle and fur and sinew. Alien things in their pastoral surrounds. But vital all the same. Hugely strong and tuned to their rider's every impulse. They are an extension of will as much as of limb. In the deepening dusk they

stoop, hefting boulder and bale on the prongs of their tusks.

The people look on. Massive animal and fragile human united in shared labour.

And there are other things too. In the gloom. Mounted soldiers. Armored and silent. At the edges of copses. Lighting the fields and the soft, new plough with the glow of their watch lights. Iron sentinels. The eyeshine of the night animals throwing their bright vigilance back at them. Their steel casings muted in the dusk. They stand. Isolate. Unmoving as the mountains wallowing in the blood of the day's dying.

Wolf Riders, they are called. And Ironclads. Called by the small figures of flesh and bone over whom they watch. Called other by those they bring violence to. Bone Breakers. Widowmakers. Iron Horse. Each one tall and broad. Hands ending in huge metallic gauntlets. One gripping the reins, the other resting on the haft of a warhammer. The cold tool of a grim trade.

This is the kingdom of Wessenland. A kingdom, like many other kingdoms, straining at the leash. A kingdom new-formed and mewling. Wet from the womb and anxious to stretch its legs.

And under Alfred's grandfather and father it did just that. The League of Rhordia,

Basilean Paladins by Paul Mullis

Kings of War battle by Peter Grose

practical and politic, was the first to open trade negotiations with this upstart and barbarous kingdom from the north and west. And the League received furs and timber and amber trinkets of dazzling beauty. And Wessenland, for its part, received blackpowder weapons and the training to use them.

The Machinists of the League revealing just enough of the secrets of gun and cannon to support the Wessenland armies in their wolfish exploits. Line regiments of soldiers in green-and-red coats, black powder weapons and cavalry troops. Feathered helmets. Uniforms beginning to ape those of the League and other more *refined* kingdoms. The bark of rifles and the snap of pennants and behind them, the primal roar of gunpowder. The bellow of the big guns. Another people brought to heel.

And then it stops.

Alfred stops it all.

His *learning* stops it. Stops the march of his own nation.

Alfred calls back the armies and the longships. Silences the cannon. Calls back the ravening hordes of berserkers.

Instead, he builds libraries. He frees the slaves and, at a stroke, outlaws the taking of them.

In the eyes of some, he has become corrupted by the flabby sentimentalism of the southern lands. The lands of sun and honey. The lands where the wolf is seldom seen.

And now, as the moon rises, its light falls over the city of Wessenland Harbour itself. Through an arrow slit, Alfred looks out on his people. A town buzzing with commerce and alive with noise and light. The clamour of prosperity and the yawp of ignorant high spirits. The moonlight falls over the bright town and the dark sea that laps against it.

And laps too against the shins of a solitary figure that stands in the shallows. Harald Wealdsturm, Earl of Innsmouth. Armored and helmeted as though for war. The figure stands and looks eastward. Looks at the small glow from Alfred's window. He seeks out Alfred but in the dark and at this remove he cannot see his king. But he knows he is there. Naïve and weak. Coddled in pages of empty writing.

He watches from the shallows. Watches with his ship riding the combers behind him. Watching and waiting. As though he can see the end coming.

See the king on his knees. Alfred with blood worming from his lips. Alfred with his hands clawing at his throat. From another room the sounds of screaming. His wife. His sons.

His sons too? Had there been time? Time to escape?

See the king as he falls.

And suddenly Harald Wealdsturm is Lord of Wessenland. By right and by conquest. The earl of Innsmouth, an earldom of salt flats and shallow channels. An earldom built on slavery and the revenue it brought. An earldom chewed by frost and smothered by ice for three months of the year. An earldom impoverished by Alfred and his soft, southern mores. An earldom ruled by a family with more than a little Varangur blood in their veins. An earldom that now held the reins of power and would steer Wessenland wherever its bloody-handed lord wished.

And he wished a return to the old ways.

Suddenly, the great Basilean and Rhordian craft that ploughed the seas for trade and other business stopped coming to Wessenland. All knew why. Harald with his horned helm and vicious arrogance. Harald and his wanton cruelty. In Wessenland

Basilean Paladin by "C.M. Minis"

Undead Revenants by Jim Kew

knowledge was lost. Sometimes wilfully. Technology failed. And things that should not have been forgotten vanished in the unspooling of the years. The Machinists who had tended Alfred's fledgling milling and weaving machines fell away in expertise. Things decayed. People moved on to a future that was a shadow of ages long past.

Only the war machines were maintained. The arquebus and the cannon.

Clod Stompers were harnessed and equipped for battle. Their tusks honed. Their brains maddened.

And so the Fall of Wessenland began. As the kingdom grew again, so too did it become more savage, more barbaric. Old nations. Conquered through blade and gun. Falconfall first. Then the Eastland colonies were formed. Natives all dashed to pieces by a hail of shot and shell. Crushed by Wolf Riders and Beasts of War. Then Sciria. Then Landvor. Then a host of others. Harald's berserkers given free rein to slick the land with gore.

And so it came to be that Wessenland became synonymous with barbarism, which had so lately been a beacon of learning and advancement. And all the lands around it became sodden and impregnate with blood. The terrain become a butcher's block.

And yet, the crown sits heavy on the head of Harald Wealdsturm.

For Alfred's sons still lived.▪

DEADZONE
THE CLEANSING

PART THREE

By Matthew Lindsay

- ***Dramatis Personae***
- *Rylor Ings, Enforcer 8th First Recon Response*
- *'The Fourth', Enforcer 8th First Recon Response*
- *Caelum Augustus, Enforcer Captain of the Gorgon's Fury*
- *Celeste Allenova, Enforcer Interrogator of the Gorgon's Fury*

Enforcer Vessel "Gorgon's Fury"
Location: Gamma Tau, Low Orbit.
Infantry Recreational Room, 04:34 hours Earth equivalent.
14 days since First Recon's failed extraction / 2 hours 26 minutes until planetfall.

A shot rings out. Rylor turns, raising his weapon, expecting to see a Plague Stage Three firing.

He doesn't.

It's the Fourth.

She's unloaded a bullet into the Third's skull from behind.

She turns to him.

Darkness.

Deadzone Plague by "C.M. Minis"

* * *

Rylor Ings had risen early this morning of the ships artificial day-night cycle, the lights of the infantry quarters still dimmed in imitation of early dawn. For the first time he opened the case housing the footage of his near execution. He ran his fingers over the data unit. No markings, no title. Nothing. It had sat on top the solitary shelving unit in his assigned room since its delivery, untouched, unmolested. He hadn't known what he was waiting for. He had intended to watch it immediately, but found himself unable to do so. He hadn't even been able to bring himself to open it. So he shelved it.

Rylor had been in Limbo, a man caught in that void of existence when the past is torn away and one does not know where they come from nor where they are going; but they merely exist, exist, exist solely to keep breathing. The past was a lie and the future even more so.

Then, midday yesterday, the call had finally come. Briefing and preparation was at 06:00 hours earth equivalent. 07:00 hours they were to descend to Gamma Tau. The cleansing and search for the Artefact was to begin, three seven-man squads were to be sent. Rylor would be a part of Alpha team, led by Augustus himself.

Plague Gen 3 by Jamie O'Toole

Deadzone Plague by Liam Markey

Once the call had come through Rylor knew what he had been waiting for. So he awoke early, took his final recovery medication, and picked up the data unit.

Two weeks gone. Two weeks since his release he had fought and trained and sweated and bled so he would not have to think. But he had to know what he was descending back into. He had to see what had happened, recall it all – every heart achingly painful instant – because that was the only way he could ever face her again.

The Fourth. Today was the day he began his search for the mother of his child. The person who had tried to kill him.

* * *

A shot rings out. Rewind. A shot rings out.

Why would she do that?

Rewind. A shot rings out. Again. And again. And again.

Rylor paused the recording and sat a while without moving. Then he gently placed the vid control on the table, seeing if he could do so without making a sound. He did so, and felt pleased. It was in such things he found his solace. In any undertaking that could momentarily distract him from what had happened, no matter how small. In all his

duties he was meticulous, in all tasks he threw himself with all effort he could muster.

Each day Rylor had pushed himself to the utmost limitations of his physicality. His waking hours had become routine: exercise, eating, training, mock combat, exercise, eating, weapon study, sleep. The routine was his own making; since his release he had been entirely left to his own devices. He saw other Enforcers but he may as well have been a ghost. He knew no names, only faces. He had not spoken to them or them to him. Rylor would see the Enforcers preparing for the descent to Gamma Tau, being briefed together, training together, eating together. But not Rylor. The only sign he had not been forgotten was a single bunk room in Enforcer quarters and three meals a day delivered there.

The first day of his release he had received no instructions as to what he should do or where he should present himself. He stopped outside the briefing room, stumbling across it as he explored the ship, seeing Captain Caelum Augustus inside giving some sort of lecture to the Enforcers present. Augustus was the only one whom Rylor knew by name, recognising him by bulk and by rank. But the Captain stopped talking the moment Rylor entered and the room fell silent. All eyes turned on him. Rylor said nothing and left; he did not attempt to integrate himself again. Augustus simply watched him leave.

Later, he had found Augustus in the Officers' Quarters. He asked him for a copy of the shuttle footage recovered from Gamma Tau. Augustus nodded but said nothing about what had happened earlier in the briefing

Deadzone terrain, image courtesy of Mantic Games

room. The next morning, a copy of the footage was waiting outside Rylor's room. Again, there were no instructions as to what Rylor should do that day.

So, appearing to have free reign of his time for the first time since he had joined the Enforcers in his long forgotten youth, Rylor did the only thing he knew: he trained and prepared.

What exactly he was training for he could not say.

It was not for the descent back into Gamma Tau; Rylor was a soldier, and moreover he was First Recon. He had been prepared for combat the moment he could again lift a rifle. But this newly adopted regime was something more. It was to the point of obsession, a maniac striving for the unreachable. His wounds were healed but he ravaged his body, beyond nausea, beyond pain, and each night he collapsed into his bunk and black oblivion. His sleep was dark and dreamless, silent as the grave he would one day inhabit.

By Marcel Popik

Perhaps, he thought while lying there one morning, that is what he was preparing for.

Rylor had sometimes seen the Captain, a large sweeping shadow of a figure, in the peripheries of his vision. He presumed Augustus was observing his methods, seeing how he would respond to his freedom. To what had happened.

Augustus had told him to be ready and so he would be. Day by day Rylor numbed himself further, unthinking, unfeeling. He healed and fought, then healed and fought again. He tore open day-old wounds only for them to heal and re-open the next day. He bled. He ached. Two weeks he trained aboard the

Deadzone Plague by Matthew Beer

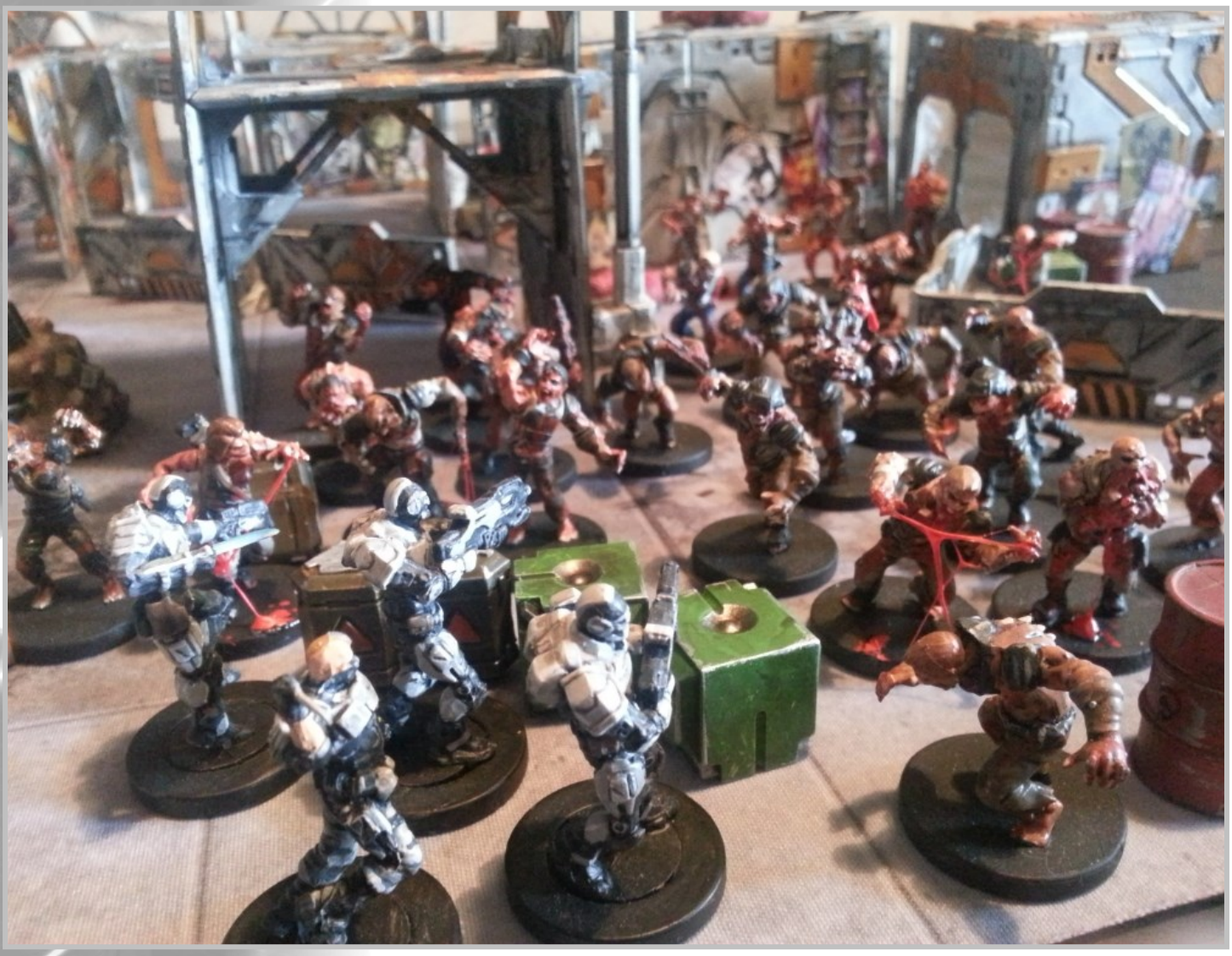
Gorgon's Fury but it felt like a lifetime. He had difficulty in recalling anything that had happened before his awakening in that holding cell. He knew he had a child, that somewhere out there in the vast blackness of space was a piece of himself, a life he had fathered. He also knew that child had a mother, whom he had once loved.

Once loved?

Still loved?

Rylor felt the most focussed he had ever felt, his awareness heightened beyond even that of First Recon training. Something within was driving him onward, pushing him to attain feats of physicality and combat prowess he had never before known.

He had once known a life before this waking dream of sweat and adrenaline and blood, but the memories were vague, wisplike, ethereal. He once attempted to grasp them, to recall who he was and had been, after days of silence the loneliness of his situation becoming too much to bear. He found himself withdrawing from the touch of enlightenment the moment it had threatened to be caught. He was not yet ready to descend those depths that had once filled him with joy. They had been



Deadzone battle by Boris Samec

destroyed, ruined as surely as his body had been and there was no way to make them whole. And so he endured his existence as one endured a cancer.

His body may have been ready, his skills as an Enforcer even more so, but not yet his mind. Not yet that. Yet the brain was a muscle, and like all muscles, could be trained and controlled. Rylor held onto that logic the way a drowning man held onto a piece of flotsam, drifting alone in a sunless black sea.

* * *

Rylor shook the thoughts of the last fortnight away and any creeping despair with them. All that mattered was the now; him, here in this moment. Still alive. Still breathing. Surviving.

And this was real. This was happening. In a few hours he would be treading the planet's surface, looking for her. For all his self-medicated physical punishment and numbness he still felt keenly the wounds he had suffered. Perhaps more so. The further he ran from what had happened the wider the abyss yawned behind him. He fought the invisible war within, beneath the flesh; his skin was healed but the damage was done.

And all along, all he really knew was he had to find her.

He glanced back at the vid screen. It had paused it at the moment he fell to the floor. The Fourth was there, frozen in time, as she turned her back on him. Blood hadn't yet begun to form around him. But it would. It already had in his mind.

He realised he still couldn't say her name. He couldn't label her. To give her a name made her real. Made them, real. And he couldn't do that. Not if he was to do what he had to do once they found… her.

Rylor look down and saw his fists were clenched. His knuckles had turned white. His jaw ached from gritting his teeth.

He released the tension slowly.

Inhaling deep, Rylor leant forward, picked up the vid control, and again pressed play. The scene repeated itself just as he knew it would, just as it had every time. The footage ended. Rylor pressed play and watched it anew. The room was silent, the only noise that of the vid. It made the gunshots all the more harrowing.

Deadzone Plague by "Boston Miniatures"

Deadzone Enforcer Strider by "C. M. Minis"

The door to the rec-room opened and a lone female Enforcer walked in with a half shaven scalp of dirty blonde hair swept over to the right; a winding tattooed vine of black and grey roses descended from the shaved side of her head around her neck and down to wherever else it may lead. From the neck down she was covered in black under-armor fatigues. He recognised most of the Enforcers stationed in the barracks, but he did not recognise her.

There shouldn't have been anyone awake at this hour, let alone in the rec-room ready to don armor – and that included Rylor – but the stranger didn't pause as she entered. She looked at Rylor as if she had expected him to be there but held his gaze for a second too long than was comfortable. Rylor felt naked beneath that gaze.

She made her way across the room to food storage. Rylor turned away from his silent companion and back to the vid screen, pressing play, used to being the silent anomaly among the other Enforcers.

Rylor watched the footage again. He restarted it once finished.

'It's not going to change, you know,' a female voice called from the side of the room. The

voice itself was a contradiction, endearing with an edge to it. Perhaps that's just because it's the first voice that had been directed at him for a fortnight, thought Rylor. Maybe he'd forgotten what it was like to be spoken to. He took a moment to consider his reply.

'I'm not expecting it to.' He did not turn from the vid screen.

'Not exactly the kind of reply that required much thought, Rylor Ings. Why did you hesitate?'

He turned to face his companion, an unwilling participant to conversation. The Enforcer was leaning against a counter eating something out a bowl, looking up at him as she did so. Now that Rylor saw her, he noticed her heart-shaped face was of indeterminable age. 'Perhaps I was wondering if you were actually talking to me. Until now, none bar Captain Augustus have, and even he only once.'

She lounged, but the way she held herself was akin to a coiled cobra. Rylor did not believe she was casual as she appeared. She was a predator posing as prey.

Deadzone Rebs vs Plague by Jamie O'Toole

‘Hmm,’ she said between mouthfuls. ‘Have you seen me before?’

‘No. Not that I know of.’

‘You are correct. We’ve not met, not formally at least. You wouldn’t recognise me, because you do not know me. So do not presume to know me. My point is I was clearly talking to you. So I’ll ask again, why did you hesitate?’ She resumed eating.

‘You caught me off guard.’ Rylor made to turn back to the screen. The female wouldn’t let him.

‘Bullshit. A First Recon caught off guard? No. Why did you hesitate?’

‘I guess I didn’t know what to say.’

‘You’re lying. And you’re bad at it.’ She put the bowl down, empty.

‘Who are you? Why so interested?’

‘I am Celeste, you are Rylor. Why did you hesitate?’

‘Honestly? Because I was weighing you up,’ Rylor did not disguise his irritation. For two weeks he had lived in silence for this, a verbal interrogation in the small hours, today of all days? Screw her.

‘Explain.’

‘Who would come into a room at this hour – dressed and ready all but for weapons and armor – and eat apart from the others? I see no rank. I know the way you hold yourself you’re used to fighting, not just from

Deadzone Survivor Mercenary by Liam Markey

Enforcer training but something more. It’s a part of you. I’d even guess you like it, you’ve got a wry smile on even now as we talk – you like the challenge. Shaved head, but still a good length of hair, enough to grab. So you’re used to fighting with a helmet on because without a helmet that hair’s a weakness. You should shave it all.

‘And then suddenly you speak. Forthright tone, condescending. So I weigh the options, and think “who would be the first person to

speak to me for two weeks, knowing all that I know?" I got no answer. So I considered my reply.'

She cocked her head. 'And you gave a guarded one.'

'I'm not about to bare my soul.'

'Oh you needn't be shy with me, Rylor. I've already seen your soul. I was your Interrogator.'

Rylor's reaction was to say something immediately but he thought better of it. She'd gotten under his skin. A second later he realised he hadn't known what to say anyway. So he said nothing. Celeste raised an eyebrow.

'Considering your reply again? I presume from the length of this silence I can expect something profound?'

Rylor gave no reply. Celeste shrugged. 'So be it, foreplay over.' Her demeanour changed – the cobra uncoiling itself – and she stood up straight, crossing her arms.

'Two things, Rylor. First, we're descending into Gamma Tau in three hours. We are both a part of Alpha team. I want to know where your head is at. And second, as for the wry smile you mentioned?' Celeste turned her head to face him directly. 'I have an asymmetrical jaw, my mouth's angled up on the right. Few years back I took a grenade face-on. Of course they could fix it, make me pretty again, but I kinda like it. Reminds me I survived.' A sardonic smile emphasised her

Deadzone terrain, image courtesy of mantic Games

Deadzone Wrath Mercenary by Nicodemus Sandberg

point; it did favor the right of her face, but her eyes were hard.

Celeste waited for Rylor's reply. Neither moved; both were statuesque.

'Really, Rylor? Really? You're going to sit there and stare and say nothing?'

'Okay. My turn. Two things for you: first, I'd apologise, but you don't need it. Second, I do not enjoy my skills being questioned. I'm First Recon.'

'You arrogant bastard, I'm not questioning your skills. I've seen how you've trained aboard this ship. As I said: I want to know where your head is at. I want to know if we find the Fourth, what you intend to do about it. We both know what she was to you.' Celeste was in interrogation mode now, observing every response, almost begging Rylor to lie to her. She would know. She always did.

He shrugged. Was he mocking her? 'I'll do whatever is needed.' He meant that, at least. There was no hesitation or doubt.

'You prepared to put a bullet into her? Or a knife?'

‘Whatever is needed.’ His tone of voice was flat.

‘Think you could do that? Get up close and personal, look her in the eyes you once so loved looking into, as you ended it, permanently?’ Celeste took a step toward Rylor, standing above him. ‘Think you could be as cold as her?’

He was silent a moment. ‘I’ve given you my answer, Interrogator. What else do you wish to know?’ Rylor rose, matching her stance. He hadn’t realised it sitting down but while she was tall, she wasn’t as tall as she appeared. Rather, she carried herself well, giving the impression of height.

‘How have you been sleeping?’

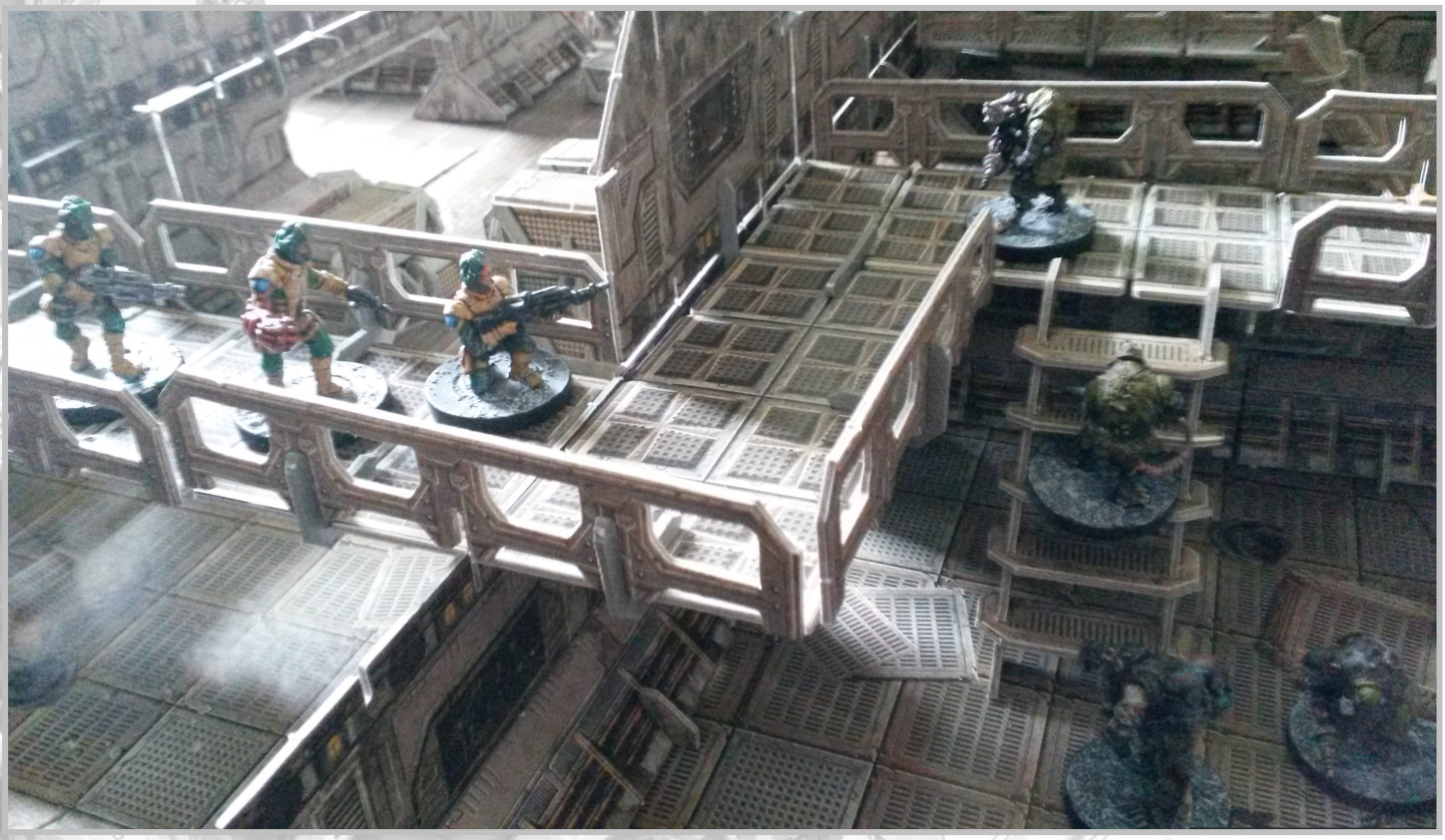
‘Dark and dreamless and black as space itself.’

‘No trouble at all? You’ve not been exhausting yourself because you fear your dreams?’

‘Even if I did, which I don’t, the very fact I was doing something about it would compensate.’

‘Perhaps. But perhaps not. A rested body doesn’t compensate a rested mind. A lapse here, a hesitation there, someone winds up dead. Fouled up beyond all recognition in an instant. Look at what happened to your squad. For all their training, no one seen that coming did they?’

‘Well what about you, Celeste?’ It was the first time he had used her name. ‘So eager to speak ill of the dead. You ever have any trouble sleeping? You’ve killed people. You ever worry you’ve done something wrong that you can’t put right? Or that you might



Deadzone GCPS vs Veer-myn by Paul Mullis

Deadzone Rebs vs Plague by Jamie O'Toole

have to? What if your life was a lie?'

'I've never had trouble sleeping. I've killed men, women and children, and never had trouble sleeping.'

Rylor swallowed his reply. He had heard Enforcers talk like that before. He'd heard himself talk like that before, in extended conflicts where you feel you can't breathe for the suffocation of war. It is not a sane path to walk down.

'I'm not sure what to say to that.'

'There isn't a lot to say,' Celeste replied. She left the room.

Rylor watched her go.

To be continued...▪

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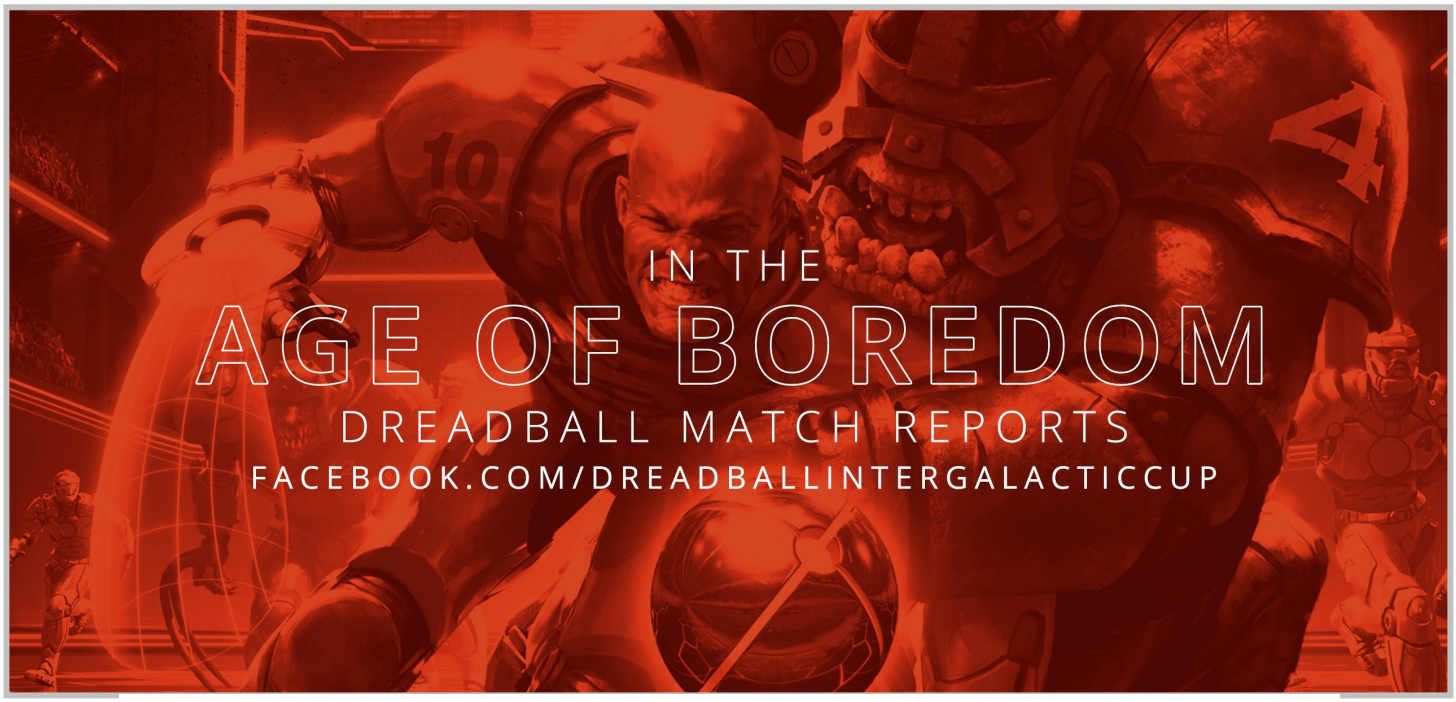

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